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Leslie, John

The best college
fraternity?

Peoria, Ill.

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The Best
College Fraternity

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Box 346

John Leslie

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The
Best College Fraternity
?

John Leslie
assisted by Richard Dickson

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Box 346

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Dedication

To the Deans of Men . . . those who have guided and advised thousands of college students through their most impressionable years . . . those whose lives have been given to building the character of and moulding the future for their best friends—the college students . . . those who have fathered the college fraternities, studied their shortcomings and prescribed the happy remedies which have made them prosper . . . to those fine gentlemen, the Deans of Men, do we, the authors dedicate these chapters.

The Authors

Twenty-four years ago a northbound passenger train carried the usual crowd of vacationists, seeking the cool and quiet of the north country. In one car of this particular train sat two mothers, each with her small son.

The string of coaches sped up the Illinois River Valley as the time approached for the noon meal, and, in vogue with the customs of the day, one of these young mothers brought forth the old white shoe box in which was packed the luncheon for herself and son.

Hungry eyes of the little fellow across the aisle were cast longingly toward the lunch box . . . they had to be satisfied. The parents exchanged glances, smiled and after a few nods the four realized that they had all come to the same party.

The mothers visited, the boys played together, chicken drumsticks were exchanged and the casual acquaintance proved entirely

pleasant to all concerned during the trip . . . Then, it came autumn and those same two youngsters marched off to school together, each in his little sailor suit. You see, they were neighbors but had never met until the chance acquaintance on the train that summer.

Years will pass before we can relate the story of the drumsticks in its completeness. But, entirely too quickly eight years in the grades and a high school training have passed into history. There have been four pleasant years under the same roof at college and twice this time of enjoyable relationships since graduation.

These two small boys are the authors.

The Offer of the College

"To be at home in all lands and ages; to count nature a familiar acquaintance, and art an intimate friend; to gain a standard for the appreciation of other men's work and the criticism of your own; to carry the keys to the world's library in your pocket, and feel it's resources behind you in whatever task you undertake; to make hosts of friends among the men of your own age who are to be leaders in all walks of life; to lose yourself in generous enthusiasms and cooperate with others for common ends; to learn manners from students who are gentlemen and form character under professors who are Christians—this is the offer of the college for four of the best years of your life."

WM. DEW. HYDE

President of Bowdoin College 1885-1917

Preface

The college fraternity is an institution with which every young man should become familiar before leaving the environment of his home to dwell in a new and strange atmosphere. It is a vital factor in the educational system of the majority of colleges and universities. Most high school boys are surprisingly ignorant concerning the fraternity system.

Conservatively, seventy-five percent of the freshmen matriculating at colleges today are invited to visit fraternity houses. They are asked to make decisions, much more important to their future careers than they appreciate at the time. Entirely too many of these freshmen are unprepared.

We, the authors, have been intimately associated with fraternities . . . in high school, in the minor colleges, where few of the chapters have national affiliations, and in universities. We have studied various types

of rushing systems; that is to say, the different regulations governing pledging and entertainment of underclassmen as provided by the faculty.

As undergraduates we, the authors, scrutinized the methods used by all different classes of fraternities, knew their initiation practices and investigated their fundamental characteristics as to scholastic requirements, finances and sincerity of purpose. Because of our honest conviction that the college fraternity has a place, and a very important one, on every campus; and because we look forward to the day when there will be sufficient fraternities to care for every man who matriculates at an institution of higher learning we have set forth in the following pages a carefully prepared guide to the younger fellows who are looking ahead to the happiest days of their lives.

CHAPTER I

PREMATURE CONCEPTIONS

At one time or another during his preparatory school days, almost every boy forms some definite impressions of the college fraternity. His information may have been gleaned from conversation with friends older than he, from reading college literature, or in advice handed down by his family or relatives. There is no doubt but that the average fellow is giving some thought to the question during his high school days.

All can not be fortunate enough to have fathers or brothers with college fraternity affiliations. Those who are "legacies," so-called, are certainly better informed than the average high school students, but even they often possess erroneous ideas on the subject. In an attempt to avoid influencing a brother or son, the elder member of the family will often refer to his society rather lightly, and convey the wrong impression entirely. Most college fraternities teach their members this

spirit of fairness, suggesting that the "heirs" be received on the same ground as other newcomers, and visit their chapter open-minded.

So, it is a conservative wager that most of the boys in prep school have not "seen the light" as far as college fraternities are concerned. They look upon them as social organizations, where they may live with some jolly, good fellows, perhaps; where they may dance with some sweet young ladies once or twice a month, or where they may sing and have a merry time when not obligated with the duties of the classroom. They dream of wearing a clever badge on their vests . . . think of the prestige they will carry among their fellow freshmen with a pledge pin in the lapel the first week of school.

Isn't it true that many high school boys look forward to belonging to a college fraternity just because they want to belong to something? They long to become associated with one of the larger national secret societies. Yet, they awaken later to see that the college fraternity is far more important than

they have imagined in their most serious moments of conjecture. How fine it would have been for these young men had they understood, and not been obliged to learn by experience.

CHAPTER II

GRADUATION

One of the speakers at a graduation exercise explained that commencement day was most appropriately named, for on that day every graduate was but commencing—starting anew. As a matter of fact, the high school senior becomes associated with college the moment he receives his diploma. He finds himself abruptly thrown into social intercourse with college folks. His mind is working overtime, ever active with problems to be solved before the fall.

First, there must be a choice of college. The matter of expense will influence many, while those who are not so concerned with finances

will have all of the great universities and colleges to consider. Then, there is the perplexing problem of choosing the line of study to be pursued. While these major questions are being pondered, however, the college fraternity will not be forgotten.

Unfortunate, indeed, is the student who has pledged himself to join a college society before his graduation from high school. This remark may seem ridiculous at the moment, for certainly a man should never accept a bid to any fraternity until he is a regularly enrolled freshman in the college where the chapter is located. But it is a practice with some fraternities to pledge their new men while they are still in prep school. Such tendencies are condemned by all good societies . . . they are unquestionably a sign of weakness.

CHAPTER III

SUMMER ACTIVITIES

Summer time is a busy time for all college fraternity men, as a rule. . Many high school graduates will find themselves pursued constantly by their acquaintances returning home for vacations. They will hear the praises of fraternities sung by the enthusiastic chapter members, ever watchful for likely prospects to add to the growing rushing lists. Invitations will be received by mail, and the most wise procedure in replying to these is of sufficient importance to consider for a moment.

Some rushing letters are written along the line of the following: "Dear Mr. Harris: Johnny Martin, a mutual friend, has told me that you expect to enter the University of Kansas in September. I am certainly pleased to hear of your decision, and am writing at this time to offer the assistance of myself and the boys of the Tau Delta house in locating a room for you. We shall also be mighty glad

to meet your train, aid in registering you in the university, etc.etc. Johnny and the rest of us want you to spend the first two days after your arrival with us, so please plan to take luncheon and dinner with Tau Delta Nu on September 21 and 22. With very best regards. . . ."

A fellow very naturally becomes confused if he is the recipient of several invitations similar to the above. He does not wish to offend anyone by refusing all the suggested dates, offers to be met at the railroad station and proposed advice in enrolling at the college and arranging studies and classes. There is but one course to follow. Do not permit one fraternity to monopolize the first two days.

Unfortunately, we can not take the time or space here to publish other samples of the customary forms used by the rushing chairman in correspondence with new men. It is sufficient to say that, for the most part, the texts are similar and the purpose always to obtain as many early engagements with the incoming "Frosh" as possible.

This little informal guide to the prospective fraternity men will be a success, if for no other reason than to influence them against favoring one or two chapters with all their leisure time during their early days at college. There will be more invitations as the summer wears on. And, then again, there will be others, after friendships are made on the campus.

The fraternities will not rely entirely upon letters to arrange engagements. Many invitations are extended by word of mouth, and often under conditions which do not make it easy for the high school lad to refuse. The summer months will bring picnics, dances, luncheons and banquets staged by local alumni organizations. The rushee will suddenly find himself surrounded by a host of new friends. In all probability that summer before he enters college will be the most pleasant he has ever spent.

One should not refuse to attend these pre-rushing functions. He should take the opportunity to become acquainted with the fraternity men in his own locality, especially the

boys of his own age, for after college he will very likely become associated in a business and social way with these same men. On the other hand, this high school graduate must guard against forming any prejudices during the vacation months—strive always to retain an open mind.

CHAPTER IV

IMPORTANCE OF FRATERNITIES

When the smoke has cleared from the barrage of summer entertaining, launched by the various local fraternity clubs, the young fellows who have become weary handshaking their hosts of two months or more will probably agree that the college fraternity is of some importance. They will have had a taste of what is to come during the first week or two at school.

However, their impressions of the college fraternity and its importance to them may

have been sadly distorted. For that reason a chapter is devoted to this subject.

The fraternity system is important to the college as well as to the members of the chapters and alumni bodies. It has gone a long way toward solving the housing problem, which has been a difficult one to control in most of the larger institutions. Obviously, groups of twenty-five to forty students are more wieldy from the standpoint of administration of college regulations, traditions, etc., than hundreds of little rooming house cliques, numbering from two to six men, each.

Granted that the fraternities and sororities increase the supply of desirable living quarters, and are economically sound because of providing rooms and food at cost, the advantages to the faculty are many. Deans have the opportunity of enforcing rules of conduct through the presidents of the chapters. They may discuss matters of all kinds with thousands of undergraduates through the interfraternity councils which meet at regular intervals throughout the school year. In short, a great percentage of the student body thus

becomes automatically organized at the beginning of the school year.

Because the dean of men is a disciplinarian, many students wrongfully misjudge him and look upon him as being opposed to everything that is near and dear to them. This is an erroneous impression. A score or more of these very deans have often declared themselves as favoring an increase in the number of national fraternities. One, whom we know indirectly, has encouraged this situation to such a degree that his university now boasts of more chapters than any other institution in the United States.

Now, let us consider for a moment the importance of a fraternity connection to the undergraduate . . . to this high school youth who has paused for a breathing spell after a summer's vacation before packing his luggage and purchasing the ticket to New Haven, Champaign, Hanover or Collegetown. Like all things, there are good, bad and indifferent fraternities. Obviously, our references are solely being made herein to the

"clubs" rated as good, respectable organizations. And, there are many of them.

There is an inspiration to be gained from affiliation with a good fraternity, an incentive to achieve success in college. The freshman, when pledged, immediately faces a scholastic goal which he must achieve before becoming eligible for initiation. Furthermore, he finds himself in friendly competition with the other fellows in his house, knowing that his standings in the college subjects will be posted by the faculty. The entire pledge class of a fraternity soon feels a responsibility with its studies, for its average will be compared with that of all other groups on the campus. Along this particular line, it is well to remember that the chapter member will not only urge the new members to success scholastically, but will also assist them in their work.

It is not unusual for chapter presidents to provide compulsory study hours for the freshmen pledges, and it is a common practice to set down rules which keep them in their own rooms at least five nights of the

week. Some fraternities own permanent scholarship trophies which are awarded to the member attaining the highest numerical average. Some invite prominent faculty members to the house for discussion groups. In fact, it would not be difficult to enumerate an endless chain of reasons why the fraternity is important to the scholastic life of its members. Access to good libraries is one thing of great value.

The influence of associations formed through intimate contacts with fellow students is certainly vital to any young man between the ages of seventeen and twenty-three. The pledge immediately finds himself surrounded by twenty-five to thirty-five friends . . . to some of whom he may look for advice and with whom he may spend his leisure hours. The younger members will profit by the experience of the seniors and juniors. They find that they have acquired a home, in all its completeness, where they may entertain friends, relatives and faculty acquaintances as they should be entertained.

These associations will provide a social

background, in itself invaluable. We recall a remark made by a well known midwestern college alumnus, "if I did not learn one thing in the college classroom, my education was well worth while, for I was taught how to meet men, to mingle with them and understand them." This simple declaration would be seconded by ninety percent of the fraternity men in this country today.

In truth, this phase of fraternity life dates back to the origin of the system. In the early days college men appreciated the need for this fellowship. The fraternity idea was conceived on that principle. And it has grown and thrived because men have a desire to mingle in their work and play, to meet together for entertainment and for study.

Were we to stop here in this explanation of the importance of the fraternity, there would not be a single reader who would register a dissenting note. Yet, we have not even touched upon the economic side of the story. Living expenses are nominal, for room and board are provided at actual cost. Dues are levied, it is true, and there is an initiation

fee, but we have always thought that these expenses would be more than surpassed in extravagances for those who are forced to seek their pleasure elsewhere than in a fraternity house.

Statistics have conclusively proven that fraternity men are leaders in extra-curricular college activities. Here again is an advantage. Chapter members will induce the new men to become interested in dramatics, journalism, athletics, politics or class administrative work. They will soon sense an obligation to their school which will move them to accomplish something outside of the classroom. Without question, extra-curricular activities contribute generously to one's pre-business training. The fraternity stands with the college in supporting every recognized activity.

Space prohibits a full discussion of this subject, as pages could be devoted solely to the mentioning of the worth of fraternity affiliation to an alumnus. But, from time to time, through the following pages, reference will be made, in a general and informal man-

ner, to some of the advantages one realizes from being a fraternity man.

CHAPTER V

LEAVING HOME FOR A NEW ENVIRONMENT

Our sincere wish is that our audience, the young high school graduates, will not have come to possess a superficial knowledge of the importance of the fraternity. The time has arrived for them to leave for school. Home ties must be broken. In most cases, these boys will be placed entirely upon their own initiative for the first time in their lives. Their living conditions will be different. Scholastic responsibilities in college will be more serious than during the high school training period, with less supervision and more freedom. The pride of many has a jolt in store, for the freshman will find himself but a small frog in a tremendous puddle. The ego of the prep school senior is likely to be seriously injured.

But, happily, this is all for the best. Frank-

ly, it is one very good reason why parents choose to send their children away from home. The experience must come to all of us eventually. We are glad to have this opportunity to issue a note of warning, to suggest some of these trials and disappointments that must be expected. When leaving home the college-bound fellows must make up their minds to "burn their bridges behind them," as far as the fraternity question is concerned. Forget the fraternity affiliations of family and friends at home. Make your departure with an open mind, and assure them all that "you will take your time, look them all over and then select the one which appeals to you from every angle."

The new environment means little more than this change in the mode of living, being thrown upon one's own resources entirely and the possibility of hours of solitude, at a time when serious problems must be considered and decided. But all this affords a splendid chance for clear thinking, and the real men will survive this readjustment period most happily.

CHAPTER VI

BLOOMING CONFUSION

We trust that our freshmen friends have prepared themselves for a mental and physical strain, for this can not fail to result during the first few weeks. Study assignment will be especially heavy and tedious during the early days. Results in the classrooms during this period are of tremendous importance for then instructors form their snap judgment of their students, which often influences them throughout the semester or quarter. This situation is aggravated by the demands which the fraternities make upon the freshmen's time, excepting, of course, those schools which are fortunate in having deferred rushing in vogue.

Advice is more easily given than received, we know, but we urge that the new men remember their scholastic obligations during rushing days. Above all, convince yourself that every good fraternity has the interests of its prospective members at heart, and will admire the courage of their convictions in the

long run, even though it may appear unconcerned when urging late dates and engagements during hours when their guests should be left to themselves.

While on this subject of late hours, let us reiterate that a rushee may more successfully cope with this blooming confusion if he keeps regular hours. He must make up his mind to say "no," and keep the promise he has made to himself to spend several hours alone for serious and sane meditation each day. Above all else, freshmen must refrain from accepting dates by the wholesale, and as the days pass, ease the situation by gradually eliminating all of the chapters which appear less desirable upon first or second observation. It is an absolute truth that fraternities all expect cancellation of dates, and no hard feelings ever result.

Decisions should not be influenced by first impressions. In most cases the rushee will be introduced to a chapter at dinner or luncheon, where he will meet more than two dozen strangers in five or ten minutes time, seat himself around the table with them, and

perhaps develop a mental picture of the crowd based upon physical appearances only. He may become better acquainted with a few of the members. Now, it stands to reason that the chapter has had no better chance to know its guest than the freshman has had to make the acquaintance of the fraternity. And the answer is that, under these circumstances where stranger meets strangers, the time is not opportune to discuss pledging. It should be the furthest thing from the minds of all parties on first meeting.

Since first impressions will be formed they cannot be avoided . . . we recommend that the rushee diagnose the general, prevailing atmosphere of the chapter house. Is there an air of artificial sociability? Do the hosts all appear sincere in their cordial attitude? Are they merely making conversation when they inquire regarding your welfare or offer their assistance? Have they attempted to make a gala display with elaborate motor cars, which may have been borrowed from the folks to be returned after rushing? Were there any silvery tongued

alumni members imported for "high pressure" pledging ceremonies? Avoid confusion by giving thought to these questions in the early days of rushing. This paragraph leads us to the nucleus of our message which is a comprehensive survey of the stumbling blocks suggested briefly through the questions above.

As we turn this corner we are reminded of the good ideas of a writer whose name for the moment we regret to admit has slipped our memory. Whoever or wherever he be we thank him for this, "If one possessing youth dislikes exploring, is nervous of the untried course; if one is in fact, afraid of meeting the unknown quantity, finding no exhilaration in putting theories to the test—then the value of youth is overrated."

EVILS WE MUST EVADE

Now, we have led ourselves up to the point where we must look out for the "joker," if there is one; and after all is said and done, each deck has its "joker," if it has not been eliminated before the start of the game. Also, deuces are always wild and no harm can come

from being on the lookout for the extra ace which may be forthcoming from any side of the table.

Actually, these deuces and extra aces are "the bag of tricks," or the evils which we must guard against if we are to find ourselves with the blue chips when the bell has rung for that eight o'clock class the morning after.

For the vindication of the groups which are found indulging in the use of these evils let us admit that they are not always premeditated. Quite often they are unconsciously born because of the anxiety of the group to get a good man in whom it has become intensely interested. The boys have decided that they want the man, and do not feel comfortable or at ease until the traditional button and its tiny clasp are fast in the newcomer's lapel. So, we can say with all fairness that the group allows its enthusiasm to carry it beyond the ordinary fineness of approach, with in many cases decided injustice to the one who may be the subject involved. On the other hand, there may be in some quarters a well thought

out program of attack which involves many of the evils we are soon to discuss and which is shrouded with a network of super-psychology.

We will, in the next few pages, try to point out some of the evils which we hope and are sure will be recognized when the time comes.

The "hot box" is one of the better known methods used by certain crowds, generally because they fear the freshman will postpone his decision until his next visit and in the interim be swung over to the competing neighbors by similar practices. Or it may be that the members recognize the organization's inferiority and know the subject will readily appreciate its weakness in contrast with some of the better crowds. This so-called "hot box" is not all that the name might indicate; that is, it is not a hot box, literally speaking, as one might expect to find in a masseur's emporium. Oftentimes it might better be, for the good of the party involved. The fraternity "hot box" happens to be one of vocabularies. It is a verbal pressure from those

gray bearded seniors and juniors . . . the upperclassmen.

When you find yourself invited to join two or three of your hosts in a trip to the card room, the second floor lounge, the library, the dorm or the attic, it will be well to bear in mind these closing chapters. Remember this, temporarily at least, "I am the master of my fate, I am the Captain of my Soul." The presentation of the offer to join the band . . . to come into the fold, as it were . . . may be wholly pleasant, but should you find yourself being unduly urged remember that after all there is no particular need for haste. Inform your friends that you want to hear the entire story of their fraternity and that afterwards, if they have no objections, you would like to give the matter a day's careful thought. They may express their disapproval but, in the long run, they will admire you for your courage, poise and ability to resist.

We recall one of our friends who once was seated in the center of a little bedroom circle, being urged to make a promise which he was

not then prepared to deliver. Apparently with the hope of clinching the deal, one of the seniors broke the silence, "Well, George, I'm going to put this button on you, if I have to sit here all night." Our friend's reply was something like this, "Suits me. You're a nice looking lot of fellows. I'll sit with you." After two hours the party grew tired and disbanded. George strolled home to his room with a clean lapel, never to return to that chapter house. Of course, the whole affair was silly but such things happen, so be sure you have the strength of your convictions as George had.

The atmosphere of which we have spoken earlier in these pages is strenuous at first, and a man must beware of tiring himself physically. In the first place, late hours naturally cut in on study periods and interfere with school work. The results may mean a bad beginning and a sad ending of the first semester in college. Then, too, late hours break down resistance and you are more apt to be swayed under the attacks of the "hot box." Do not form the habit of staying

awake until midnight or later, during rushing days. Eleven o'clock is a good retiring hour in order to assure a clear head and sharp wits for making proper decisions.

Oftentimes some particular group will intentionally attempt to run a man down physically, awaiting the psychological moment to pop the question and get an affirmative answer.

At this point we suggest that all invitations to spend the night at fraternity houses be refused, at least until you have made your choice, or think that you have. It is not necessary to obligate yourself in this way. Undoubtedly you will get more rest in your own room. Our intention is not to implicate all fraternities with this story, but an interesting incident took place at a mid-western university one fall not so long ago.

A fraternity guest had prepared himself for a good night's rest when he suddenly heard whisperings outside his door: "Let's go in and talk to him now so that he will sleep on it." Before the aggressors had the door opened the boy was slipping on his trousers

over his pajamas. He left his bag at the fraternity house, walked two blocks down the street to the house where he had been "bid" earlier in the day, and announced that he was ready to join their crowd, if they still wanted him. Of course, they wanted him, so they shook hands all around, had a good laugh and turned in, calling it a day. More foolishness, but a true story.

The alumni, regardless of their importance, really should not be among those present during the rushing season. In some schools it is against the university or college regulations to use alumni to influence freshmen in fraternity matters. It seems that it is a very good rule but not general enough in its scope to benefit many schools.

As can be clearly seen, it is difficult for the freshmen to differentiate between the alumnus and undergraduate active member. A man might meet and visit with a couple of alumni whom he likes particularly well, join a fraternity because of them, only to learn too late that his two best friends were not in school at all. In schools where a deferred

rushing practice is in vogue this problem is not important, for the new men have ample opportunity to make the acquaintance of all the active chapter members. It is in cases where the alumni are used as decoys that you should be on the lookout for other irregularities. Should you notice a man who appears to be an alumnus, do not hesitate to ask about him, for you have a perfect right to do some of the judging in this contest.

Frequently, two or three boys, friends during their high school days, set out for college together. Possibly they have decided that, all things being equal, they will join the same fraternity. On the other hand, they may have decided to choose separately and individually, if the chance for such action is at all possible. Frankly, we recommend the latter of these two courses as the most satisfactory as a rule. We mention this, for it is not unlikely that two men, having the same high school associates, will have different friends in college. If this is the situation, the freshmen can gain a great deal by discussing the various groups which they have visited. Often

it is interesting to have the different viewpoints on the same fraternity. This separating of friends therefore, we believe to be a good, rather than an undesirable point. It is included among the evils only because it is considered as such by many.

It has been said that fraternities do not like to bid or pledge, at the same time, two rushees who have been intimate friends. The chapter's argument is that they are apt to encounter more sales resistance when dealing with the men collectively. This may be true. In a number of instances we have noted, however, when asked for objections or reasons for not wishing to join a group, that each of the pair of newcomers would shift the blame to the other for holding out. The result has usually been an artificial compromise resulting in an affirmative decision. When the boys returned to their rooms to analyze the situation and explain to themselves the action they had taken, each was still condemning the other for "giving in." Freshmen should discuss fraternities privately before pledging, but each fellow should make his

own final decision. Many times close friends are separated in this way, but such a separation in fraternity affiliations has no effect upon true friendships. On the other hand, the result has often been the drawing together of two entire chapters, magnetized and influenced by the two individual's association. Thus have sprung up some of the most healthy interfraternity relationships, socially, politically and in united efforts for furtherance of college affairs.

Liquor and its relation to the entering freshmen hardly seems of sufficient significance or bearing on the subject for mention here. We do not believe that any college fraternity would offer intoxicating liquor to a guest, but certainly, under no circumstances, would this be done during rushing season to impress a freshman. On the contrary, a chapter will refrain from any mention of liquor and if asked for an expression of policy most certainly will not put itself on record as favoring drinking. The use of liquor has oft times proven a source of discomfort to the fraternity itself. Pledges and

new men should frown upon those groups which use liquor to excess.

Now we come to one of the most serious evils in the fraternity rushing system—"the closed offer." The term means that the fraternity considers its invitation to a rushee closed or withdrawn if, when first made, it is not promptly accepted by the prospective member. In plain words, that is a lot of rot and should be considered in only one light . . . as a distinct and conclusive sign of weakness on the part of the fraternity. Any fraternity which uses the closed offer is openly admitting to the prospect that it is not strong enough to stand up against the competition from other groups he will meet later. The organization using this practice is attempting to frighten the freshman into accepting the button. The closed offer means you will not have another chance to join that society should your answer be "no."

We know of one chapter using the "closed bid" which told its prospect three different times that if he refused he would never be considered for membership again. The boy

found it difficult to make up his mind so delayed a week, actually thinking that he had lost his chance. At the end of that time he was again approached by the same crowd. Because he had then reached a decision he was welcomed as a pledge, and admired many times more for his determination and strength of will.

Why should a man be hurried into accepting something which is to become a vital influence on him and a part of his being for the remainder of his life? There is no reason. The answer is that if a fraternity sincerely wants you, it will always want you. In fact, it will be better satisfied in receiving your acceptance after you have studied the field carefully and know your mind. You will find that the fraternities which appeal to you are the ones that give an "open offer." Their story is "We want you with us here, but first be sure you are correct in your decision. We are willing to have you look around, in fact, suggest that you do so before deciding." Until you tell them one way or

the other the offer should be yours to accept if they have confidence in you.

The man who joins a fraternity under such conditions is doing so of his own free will, and will happily take his place and find his new atmosphere a congenial one. This would not be true had he always the feeling that his decision was forced—he had been fairly forced into that fraternity. Remember that the “closed bid” is a sign of weakness. You may hear the story that it is used because the fraternity never has lost a man. Should you hear this, you will have listened to what some folks term “the world’s best joke.” That’s it.

In these days when the Browns are trying their utmost to keep up with the Smiths, many more elaborate houses have come into existence than was the case a few years back. Do not permit yourself to be carried away by the splendor of the house or the size of the living room table. Sometimes these are true indicators of the size of the mortgage. You cannot take either one home nor will they be able to marry your sister. Naturally, a fellow

wants a comfortable place to live but many of the best people in the world have not yet acquired their estates.

A fine house may mean a great deal of additional expense for upkeep. The members may be heavily taxed for running expenses of the plant. So beware of the elaborate fraternity homestead and feel free to query the members about the amount of money charged for dues and pledges for the house itself. In others words, do a bit of investigating. Large chapters are often required to support the larger houses. If you prefer a smaller group you must watch this angle. We do not imply that all fine houses necessitate heavy dues, the whole thing is a matter of policy, but we suggest that you do your own thinking before “dad” places a mortgage on his own home in order that you may help write off the fraternity’s mortgage. In short, ask about finances.

The last of the evils is the false front. Occasionally you will find a group of men who are nothing more than a lot of so-called “glad hand artists.” They hail you in and hail you

out, always thinking more of their self-preservation than of your own qualities and the moral contributions you may have for them during "four of the best years of your life", to quote from the "Offer of the College." After you have been received at a fraternity house, select two or three men and study them carefully. Observe the things they say, note their manners, watch closely their actions. You can then form a fairly accurate impression of them. Then take a few more of the members. Soon you will have studied a dozen or more—a good cross-section of the group—and can continue your sleuthing on the next visit. It will not be long before you know whether they are sincere or a lot of good actors. Naturally, all men are on dress parade, more or less, during the rushing period but if your eyes are open you will catch some of them off their guard.

CHAPTER VIII

SELECTING THE BEST FRATERNITY

In picking the best fraternity there are a great many things which you will want to take into consideration. A little investigation and research on your part will surely prove beneficial to you. It will not only aid you in giving an impression of what has gone before in fraternities but in many cases will prove highly interesting. The fact of the matter is that, generally speaking, our present day fraternities have lost much of the color with which they were adorned at the beginning. Nevertheless, some have clung to the old ideas fundamentally. Others, even later in origin, have adopted principles similar to some of the older groups and have built a brotherhood challenged by ideals of unquestionable magnitude. Irrespective of the rivalry which may exist between the young and old in fraternities, we suggest a few approaches to the analysis which we believe deserve consideration.

All fraternities must be considered from

the angle of background and history. You will want to know where the societies were founded and for what reasons. In this connection you should study the character of the founder or founders. These founders of living organizations must have been possessed with an unusual power of imagination. What were the personalities of those who were the embryo? Read their lives and you will thrill at many of the obstacles they overcame to give something to those who were to follow. Wars played their part in making the task difficult. But out of what often seemed a chaos grew stronger ties and greater courage. Those who survived the elements of battle, dissension and criticism should be granted their reward. They are entitled to due credit.

To absorb thoroughly this history you have at your disposal Fraternity Manuals describing completely the growth of every existing national college secret society. It is natural to assume that the more recently organized bodies may not appear in the earliest published manuals. You can, however, glean

from these guides, ideas which you hope to find in the younger fraternities.

It is not always possible to learn the specific ideals which have given impetus to growth. We can be sure that there were ideals. The hope of building up a brotherhood has been the inspiration responsible for the birth of most fraternities. Often the purposes have varied. Some groups, particularly the oldest, had as their goal the attainment of literary excellence. Years ago they were referred to only as literary fraternities. Glancing through the rosters of some of the fraternities of early vintage, we find the familiar names of authors, playwrights and actors. They had adapted themselves to the spirit and tune of their time. To achieve a high standard in the arts was one chief aim. Men were gentlemen in a slightly different sense of the word. Fortunately, or unfortunately, as we have previously said, the desire to achieve excellence in literature has met with opposition. New interests have come into being and we now find a greater diversification. More and more we have become con-

vinced that after all the whole of mankind is not moulded from the same pattern. We are more tolerant of one's individuality. This has brought out fraternities specializing in athletic superiority, in economics, in medical tactics, legal trends and in general all-around scholarship. In many cases there has been a decided shading off of these interests into a well-rounded whole. Fraternities have learned to know the value of diversification within themselves.

So your good chapter of today should be composed of men of varied types. Specialization, as the world goes today, will become part of one's life all too soon without allowing it to narrow one in his youth. We do not mean to say that the backlog of responsibility has been entirely destroyed, for the fraternity still makes its challenge and you will be wise who accept it in a large part. Broadly speaking, your fraternities today are striving to develop a true sense of "togetherness" as a group. They are allowing the individual member to specialize within

himself for his own good—immediately and in later life.

Now, for the moment, we shall consider what so many refer to as the "bugaboo" of national position among fraternities. This is an important phase of our message. National fraternities, as the name implies, have chapters placed in representative universities and colleges throughout the country. They do not limit themselves to one locality. Some have extended themselves beyond the bounds of the United States to establish chapters in Canada, thus becoming international. The relationship of the several chapters in both the national and international groups have, as a rule, been highly compatible. The advantage of the national society is clearly seen. The individual who may unexpectedly move from one campus to another may then affiliate with his chapter at his new abode, provided it be represented there and if he is acceptable to its members. The approval is not always a certainty, and this is one of the leading arguments advanced by the local fraternities.

The local fraternity is one which, as the name again suggests, has but one chapter. If a man is not confident that he will complete his college work at one institution—the school where he enrolls as a freshman—then it might be well for him to consider the locals. It may be that another chapter of a national will fall far below his standard, and the man himself may not want to affiliate. Local fraternity enthusiasts employ this as ammunition in competition with the national groups. It is not entirely without merit. Dimming to some extent this point of favor is the fact that, in many instances, local fraternities are endeavoring to obtain charters of national fraternities, or were organized purposely for so doing.

The authors are positively in favor of fraternities of a national scope. The number of chapters identified with a national society is not the all important factor to consider in choosing a fraternity, but scope might have some bearing. We believe in the national fraternity, for, as will be explained in the final chapter of this book, we think one's frater-

nity contacts develop new spheres of romance long after memory of the coveted by-laws and creeds have faded.

CHAPTER IX

ALUMNI INHERITANCE—TYPE OF MEN IN CHAPTER

Were this subject to be summarized at the very outset, we would do so by quoting that age-old proverb: "Birds of a feather flock together". Can this be true? If so you have nothing to lose and probably a great deal to gain by inquiring about the alumni in your own community. Most fraternities have their own directories or manuals. Ask to see the names of the men "representing them" in your home territory. We are reminded, in this connection, of a dynamic old professor who was famous for his annual lecture to the senior class in his section entitled, "Picking the Crowd". He knew its importance to the student in setting his right foot forward in

the start of life. We see the analogy to picking your fraternity, or picking your crowd, through the alumni inheritance. Again we ask, "Who are the alumni—the fraternity 'representatives'—in your own community?"

After you have considered history, national prestige, alumni and local prestige you then come to the chapter of which you may become an integral part. You must form your impressions of the type of men in the chapter as regards their habits and personalities. Try to pick out four or five men whom you think you would enjoy on a month's camping trip. Quiz them about their chief interests and hobbies. In close proximity to this entire subject is the question of a chapter's relationship to its college's activities. Every fraternity man should support the college in all of its endeavors, philanthropic, professional or scholastic. To visualize the true picture it would be well to talk with the dean of men, as well as several of your professors or instructors. You may have the feeling that they are not interested, but such is not the case. Probably they will not think, and

surely they are correct, that the fraternity is an absolute essential to your college success. However, they will have some valuable advice to offer, as they appreciate the importance of the fraternity influence upon under-graduate students. There is nothing more disconcerting than the wrong mental attitude toward college. It may grow out of tying up with the wrong crowd, so seek advice of those who know, whenever you feel the need of it. If your professor is not informed he will gladly refer you to the proper authority.

CHAPTER X

TYPES OF INITIATION—FRATERNITY EXPENSES

The type of initiation is rarely discussed with the newcomer; generally because the fraternity does not believe him to be concerned about that phase of it. Eventually you will be interested, and to our way of thinking the type of initiation goes a long

way toward explaining the character of the chapter and the men who compose it. Most high school boys have heard a great deal of idle conversation about paddles and trick initiations. As for the paddle, it became obsolete and out of date among the better fraternities shortly after "Mother Hubbard found that cupboard bare". And incidentally, that same Mother Hubbard did not attempt to shatter the cupboard because poor doggy had no bone. So you will find that the good fraternities do not believe they can convert a hopeless Frosh by applying liberal doses with the paddle. Such antics have become history years ago among the best societies. If you find the paddle is the law you can make up your mind promptly that you are in the wrong shop.

There is still a certain amount of "horse-play" in some college fraternity initiations. For instance, we recall one particular group that always asked its neophytes or candidates to carry a fresh egg in each pocket for six days before the initiation ceremony. Naturally, the result is a couple of broken eggs

and one dollar and fifty cents for the cleaner. There is also the stunt of sending a fellow out at midnight to collect the burned stubs of ten popular brands of cigarettes, or to catch a black female cat and a white one of the masculine gender.

A certain amount of such "horse-play" will always creep into the pre-initiation activities of some chapters because they have been born that way. We hope you will find it possible to dodge most of these practices which do not become young men of college age, and that your sponsors will enjoy you for what you are without insisting upon making a clown of you . . . but more so of themselves.

Perhaps the final thing to be weighed is the financial obligation the fraternity places upon its members. This should be investigated by all means. Occasionally a pledge who has failed to ask about expenses finds later that his chapter dues are heavier than his pocket-book can stand. Therefore, he is apt to become delinquent in his house bills, which causes worry and general distraction from

scholastic and other duties at college. The individual does not suffer alone, for the fraternity will soon begin to lag in the fulfillment of its obligations, which reflects upon its credit and works a hardship on all of the individual members in the end.

In asking your questions on the subject of expenses you should learn of the cost to pledges as well as the money required by the active members who live in the house. Most fraternities require each member, either during his freshman or senior year, to sign a pledge or make a contribution, to be paid after leaving college in installments, oftentimes not more than ten dollars annually. This money usually goes toward reducing a mortgage or for general improvement and upkeep of the house itself. These contributions should not be made to work a hardship, so we suggest that you know something of this "pledge policy" before actually signing up.

Do not misinterpret this theme to mean that all fraternities bleed their members or ask them for too much money in dues, rent,

pledges, etc. For the most part it works the other way—the fraternity is contributing much more than it receives, as is also the case with the college itself. Frankly, we believe the freshman should gladly make a pledge of some kind. The expenses of a fraternity are individual to itself. They are oftentimes a reflection of management and system, as has been touched upon earlier in these pages. The proper control of the chapter purse-strings by the fraternity officers under the guidance of its Board of Directors should right the majority of evils in this respect.

Unless watched carefully the question of expenses will involve the subject of credit, and we do not hesitate in stating that a young man who fails to watch his credit is making a great mistake. There is no better time nor place for a man to form good habits than in college, and credit is very important to his future success. Procrastination in the paying of bills, if it becomes chronic, follows a man after his college days and will rise up to strike at him all along the way. Should you, however, meet a few unexpected expenditures

which leave you in a hole, seek advice from some one. Perhaps the best way out of a situation like this is a letter home even though you may be working your way through school. We make these suggestions because bad credit not only reflects upon the man himself, but also upon his parents who may be working ever so hard to give him the chance at an education. When in trouble financially, or otherwise for that matter, take your own family into your confidence. Tell them your story—you'll feel much better if no other good is realized.

CHAPTER XI

WHAT IS THE BEST FRATERNITY?

Selecting the best college fraternity at this distance is not the easiest task in the world. It would be much simpler to pick the six best fraternities. Now and then you will hear some comment about the "Big Three", or perhaps it will be the "Big Five". Some college men will even tell you about the "Big Ten". Now after all, it would be a pretty poor fraternity

man who did not feel that his own club should be included in one of these classifications. If you want to please the chapter you are visiting, name its fraternity first, and then add the names of other good societies to compose your own "Big Three, Five or Ten".

Anyone who has had much experience with fraternities knows how difficult it is to compare many of them, and to declare one to be superior, advancing logical reasons for such statements. When such declarations are made, many times it has been purely a guessing proposition.

We are not going to leave you here, for we know the best fraternity, and it is the one you join. If you have based your decision on these theories, then you have made a complete analysis of men, ideals and purposes. You will find yourself choosing the crowd which has built of these three elements a society into which you will happily fit. It is the best for you because it fulfills your needs more satisfactorily than any other. Why then is it not the best college fraternity? We believe that it is.

If we are the judges of the type of readers who have sought guidance from this book, we say: The best fraternity, your fraternity, will have principles and ideals to inspire you. It will be progressive yet will possess enough of the old to hold a place for culture, the love of good books and literature and the finer things of life. Its members will be chosen upon their merits of character and accomplishment, not upon outward appearance or social position.

You will find there a varied type of men living for each other—giving, taking, compromising. Scholastic excellency will not be forgotten but will be considered as one of the standards by which the fraternity judges itself and its progress. You will find in this society a loyalty to the college, which goes beyond loyalty to the fraternity, and a hope of strengthening the chapter for the good of the college and all other fraternities. It will boast of a group of alumni ever anxious to return to the old halls and songs. It will be alive, and will be the best fraternity.

CHAPTER XII

NEIGHBORS FOREVER

In closing this little book, which we have written with the sincere hope that young men going away to college will benefit materially therefrom, we want to say something about "fraternity" after college. Four years after those trying days in the early fall of your freshman year you will have acquired a host of warm friends whom you will never forget. Perhaps the closest of these will be your own fraternity associates, but you will also have many close friends outside of your own order. If you have treated yourself fairly your acquaintanceship will number some good friends who are not fraternity men.

Each of these friends has had something to do with the forming of your character. Their personalities have contributed to your own, through a common sharing of ideas, pleasures and trouble. There has been a sympathetic tie between you which will live long after the coveted diploma has become wrinkled and browned with age.

Naturally separations in distance and time will come all too soon. Nevertheless, you have the longing to know what some of that old crowd are doing. There will be reunions—that simple but interesting exchange of ideas will take place again. Frequently, you will find your friendships burning with a brighter flame. One of the boys you never could quite understand, you will come to know better and appreciate. Very likely the impetus for this discovery will be some fundamental aspect which had never before opened your eyes. Years may have eclipsed some petty disorder, and you now accept the facts as they are in a broader sense.

Fortunately, some will not be separated and with them we are sure you will always find pleasant counsel. There are problems to be weighed, decisions to be made and you will want to take some of your friends into your confidence. Often-times you hear stories of men who have to hunt out someone to whom to tell their stories. If you are located in a section but a few hundred miles from your college, you will probably have

old fraternity contacts—brothers always at your beck and call. You may even have a weekly or monthly luncheon to bring you all together regularly. At any rate, you will have friends and lots of them. It is literally impossible to live for four years under the same roof and within the same environment and surroundings without forming relations with other men, which actually become a part of your very life.

It is, therefore, this friendly contact after college which is really one of the most important reactions from your fraternity experience. You must not make the mistake of resting upon the prestige of your fraternity badge for business assistance. You would not want an employer to hire you because he was a member of your fraternity. Neither would you expect to get an order for the same reason. All things being equal, then you would be favored. There is absolutely no doubt about that.

Assuming that your fraternity associates are to be what we think they should be, your neighbors in college will be your neighbors

in future years even though they may not be such frequent visitors. You are choosing a fraternity—perhaps this fall, maybe a year or two hence. It may even be that you are not going to become a fraternity man at all. At any rate, in going to college you are entering a new world, and we are sure that in picking your best friends there, you are inheriting your neighbors forever.

It is scarcely necessary to say that we, the authors, have enjoyed jotting down these few paragraphs—informal and frank as they are. If the truth were known, these ideas we have passed on to you are subjects we found discussed in our own freshman delegation of nine men just after the World War. We know you will find less of the undesirable elements today than we experienced and have felt obliged to introduce into our text. Should you encounter any of these disorders, it is our hope that you will undertake to improve and change them—for the good of the college and the fraternity system. We hope you are on the right track—and good luck and success.

THE END

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